

vcashpoint
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top tips on blagging

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First of all a well deserved round of *applause* is in order. The step between deciding to apply and actually doing it is MASSIVE so, seriously, well done!

Anyway, the little beauties that follow are here to help you with the next stage of your idea - the money! Argh!! Scary as it may seem working out what you need spend and how much of your lovely budget it will eat; all you need is a little know-how, confidence, and a B-I-G lot of enthusiasm and *poof* - the next Richard Branson is born! I promise you will have more Gifts in Kind (also commonly known as legally obtained free stuff) then you know what to do with!

So, here we go...

1. Before you even think about bombarding anyone with requests you need to sit down and work out the stuff you **need** rather than **want**. Gifts-in-Kind can be anything at all so use your imagination, but be practical. Although it is tempting to chase after your deepest desires (ie. Brad/ Angelina and a tub of Nutella) people in business are not in the habit of giving everything. Trust me, if it isn't necessary, you won't get it (and yes, no matter how persuasively you put it, they will know!)
2. Now, once you have made your pretty volunteering shopping list, coloured in the corners and covered it doodles, it is time to think strategy... first thing - **the targets!** The best thing to do is identify all the local businesses that provide the item or service you are seeking. Simple as it sounds, what are your chances of getting free studio time from the Co-op?! You need to know who you are going to approach and, just for safety, have more than one option up your sleeve.

3. Right, so now you know who you are going to be cornering (not literally of course), the next thing is the **intelligence**. And no, before you start going on 12-hour stakeouts and hiding in car boots, I do not mean James Bond style surveillance. Having intelligence when approaching businesses, especially local ones, means knowing about them: Who runs the place? Has it been around long? Is it a large or small business? Does it already participate in volunteer work? Does it make contributions to the local community? It never fails to dazzle if you stride in there knowing your stuff! It also means you can dodge and bounce back any of those random questions they usually like to fire. Moreover, you can tailor what, and how, you are asking for to fit them - the personal touch never hurt anyone!
4. So troops, we are doing well, we are through the nets over the wall and now approaching the annoyingly splintery maze (grrrrr) What will save us?? **An Action Plan!!** The way in which you approach the business you are seeking a gift-in-kind from is key. This is your first impression so, make it good. If it is local business, less formal personal communication is best. A bigger national company, go for the good-old letter (or nowadays the e-mail) – much more professional.
5. Once you have all this information and an attack plan, your best chance of getting to the next stage (that would be the face-to-face meeting) is to get a **contact**. As any celebrity will tell you networking is the key to everything (well, maybe not GCSE's or A-Levels) but it certainly helps to know a few names. Before you make any contact with your selected businesses, give them a ring and ask for the name of the person that deals with volunteer work. If no-one exists, ask for the Manager's name (always effective as it scares the person on the other end of the phone.. hehe..) Ta-dah! You have your contact.

6. When getting in touch with you new found contact, remember to **get to the point.** Most of these people are busy-busy and won't read anything longer than one side of A4 or talk for longer than 5 minutes. Get in there and sell yourself and your project. Tell them about what you will be doing; how it will benefit the community; what it could do for the reputation of the business and how much support you have (which obviously is practically everybody in the area). Once you have their attention ask if you can either call back another time and have a more in-depth *chat*, or if it would be more convenient for you to meet them. When they agree, which with your powers of persuasion they will, then you will be able to ply them with you highly important requests.

7. Darn we're doing well! Being optimistic you have got your face-to-face meeting. It's like you are meeting the Prime Minister! So what now - **prepare!** Whatever you do, make sure before meeting Mr. I-am-amazing-and-will-only-give-you-stuff-if-you-impress-me, that you know what you are going to say- and PLEASE remember your project name! (It has been done before). Think about what you are after, why you have chosen this company and last (but not least) what this item / service will be used for. Show them that you are serious!

8. Another HUGE thing is giving them a little something in return (and again, no, nothing like a leg or cake - although cake can be good if it relates to your project). I mean offer them a little something for this free item or service. You could offer to include someone from their company as a volunteer - or display a logo of theirs for people to see. Another tactic is ask their opinion Simple as a salad but letting them feel like they are participating a little in your idea often makes it harder for them to say no! Use the art of **negotiation**. Oh, and be as enthusiastic as a chipmunk on Red Bull!

9. Also highly relevant is your camouflage - in this case... a SMILE!! You can not go wrong if you smile and look like you are actually enjoying yourself. More often that not, if you are enthusiastic about something, by the end of it they will be too!

10. Well, this is it soldiers! You have your meeting and *bam* you get your stuff! Last tip - get the offer in writing. That way your new business friend cannot just deny your existence and pretend never to have met you once you have left the building.

You're about to make a fantastic difference to your local community. Woop woop! So, what are you waiting for? **Start blogging!**

v20 team

Need help?

If you have a query before or while you are applying, about the application form, application process, funding criteria, deadlines and dates for each round or anything else you can contact our help desk in one of the following ways:

By phone: **0800 089 9000**,

By text: text **vcash** to **80010**

(an advisor will call you back)

By email: **vcashpointqueries@bss.org**